
We've Been Away So Long*

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Résumé

La société occidentale néglige sa dimension Yin. Nous avons perdu de vue les aspects créatifs de la tendresse, de la réceptivité, de la compassion, de la compréhension, de l'abandon, et de l'intuition. Nous avons, au contraire, surdéveloppé notre pouvoir de dominer, contrôler, analyser, et rationaliser. Il s'ensuit que nous sommes plus divisés que jamais, comme si nous avions perdu une moitié de nous-mêmes. Nous nous sommes égarés. Nous avons perdu contact avec notre être réel, et il nous faut revenir à un état entier si nous voulons survivre. Nous devons retrouver notre coeur, fondement de nos possibilités, mais qui demeure captif tant que la dimension Yang est en charge.

Abstract

Western society has neglected its Yin dimension. We have forgotten the positive and creative aspects of our tenderness, receptivity, compassion, understanding, surrender, and intuition. Instead, we have overdeveloped our capacity to dominate, control, analyze, and rationalize. We are more than ever divided on account of this, as though half of ourself has been lost. We have left home. We have lost touch with our real being and must return to the wholeness of our being if we want to survive. We must recover our heart, the root of our possibilities, which cannot be released as long as the Yang dimension takes over.

Life: a non-rational process

We spend our lives on the shallow rim of our being. We think we can help others and change the world, when we have not begun to know our own selves, to explore, acknowledge, and integrate our possibilities and limitations. We are like biologists looking through dirty microscopes and claiming scientific results when all they have studied has been distorted by faulty instrumentation. There are such possibilities like so many seeds in us which have not begun to grow because we have simply learned to forget or even reject them. They are like an unwanted child.

When I say we, I mean in particular the Western civilization, which boasts of superiority in all fields of human endeavour. We have all been magical children once. We've all known the open vistas of our first enchanted years, when nothing seemed impossible, when the world was in our hands and imagination wielded it like plasticine. When rational analysis and the guilt and suspicion that come with it had not yet taken over. What has happened to all this?

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It is indeed no accident that nature keeps us running on the non-rational for so long. At the very beginning of life (even in the womb) we are one with reality. We have not yet learned to separate ourselves from anything. And even at birth, when autonomous breathing begins and the cutting of the cord loosens us for individual adventure, we are in the realm of the non-rational, the mysterious, the non-verbal, the non-defined, and the non-judgmental.

During those first hours into the unknown, we learn intensively; we are going through a condensed briefing, the likes of which we will never repeat. We become the world; we eat it up whole. We learn to say yes to it, to absorb it, to be one with it, at home in it. We buy into the world of matter, diversity, and otherness. We are fully integrated. Nature assures a firm basis of success in this marriage with reality, before bringing in the divider. It is indeed no accident that rational consciousness comes in long after we've lived in complete oneness with the world. This experiential matrix is needed not only to assure our wellness by feeling fully accepted and together, but also to establish a grounding of pre-rational knowledge that will endure all through life and to which we may return to recover the lost image, the lost harmony, the lost meaning of the journey.

From seed to tree

Everything is in seed form from the very beginning. The tree is already within the seed. The unfolding is foreseen at every step, and whether we are ready or not, the rational and the sexual awakenings happen in their time. Something is unfolding and leading to completion, opening more and more doors as the body/mind complex flowers into adulthood. Then, because we think all growth is over when the body reaches fullness, we forget that the seed is still thinking of the tree. For growth is not just for the physical body, there is also the emotional, the mental and spiritual dimensions or bodies to fulfill. In other words, growth to the physical is only the beginning; it is a launching pad.

But most teachers and counsellors have not advanced much beyond this point. True, they have acquired a very sophisticated mental arsenal, which serves them in their implementation of techniques, in manipulating and organizing reality. Indeed, we've become masters at manipulation, classification, and appropriation. Rational consciousness which opened up our minds at about age seven, has become the instrument by which a society obsessed with power has taken over. (Jung said that reason and power tend to go together.)

Levels of consciousness

When I talk of rational consciousness, I'm not referring to pure reason. That would be the realm of maths and physics. I am speaking of mental

dimension which is less pure and refined, more suffused with emotions. It might be useful to explain here the human make-up as I see it. We are made of many bodies, which are more and more subtle (invisible) as we approach the spiritual. At the lower level, there is the physical which is made up of sensations and instincts; then there is the mental world divided onto lower and upper mental: the emotional and the purely mental. Most of our emotions are linked to thought-forms (such as: anger, war, sex, power, which are both concepts and emotions). Newspapers and TV programs are filled with that kind of consciousness. Until and unless we have become fully aware of our emotional pervasions, most of our thinking is of an emotional kind: we distort all we see through emotional lenses. *We do not see what is there and read in what is not.*

The other level of mental consciousness is the one explored by pure science (maths and physics). It is a realm that is close to divine consciousness in us. The more one rises in consciousness, the more intuition takes over. As a child, one starts with intuition and bodily awareness, moves through emotions to reason-cum-emotions, then to pure reason and finally (if the process is completed) into intuition, which is a return to the first stance, but universalized and fulfilled.

Yin and Yang

But one can see these stages in a different way. For instance, as a Yin and Yang process. We begin with a Yin attitude (we are fully receptive to reality in childhood), then in adolescence we become very Yang; aggressive, self-opiniated, doubting, and rejecting the established world. Finally (if the process has not been curtailed) we end up with both Yin and Yang, in a beautiful meshing of receptivity and external activity.

I generally call the Yin aspect the Feminine Principle or more precisely, the Eve in us, as distinguished from (but not opposed to) the Yang or Adam. Adam in the Book of Genesis is the earth side, the aspect in us facing outwardly; it is actively engaged in transforming, in producing, or ordering. It is *prehensive*, while Eve is the inner side, the silent, *comprehensive* dimension, which is receptive more than active and which feels the whole instead of isolating parts. Adam and Eve, according to Montreal psychotherapist J. Lerède, are not two beings, but the two dimensions necessary to complete each human being.

Feminine before Masculine

To complete this picture, let me draw upon Arnaud Desjardins' interpretation of vedantic wisdom of which he is a master. This Frenchman speaks of the Hindu sculptures of male and female sex organs one can see in temples and sacred areas of India. The *lingam* (phallus) is standing erect atop a stylized *yoni* (female organ), like a candle in a saucer.

According to all appearances, this would convey the idea of sexual interpenetration. Not so, says Desjardins: the meaning of this symbol is that *the Masculine always comes out of the Feminine*. If you perform an activity, you must first have been receptive, otherwise you will act with violence and bad timing. An artist waits for inspiration to create: his work is a result of receptivity to inspiration. Even a mother starts out by accepting the sperm (a feminine attitude) to finally eject the baby at birth (a masculine activity). Nothing of value can be done which does not follow that principle. It is not a question of "something has to be done about it," but "what can be done?"; listening for the right answer to rise within consciousness. Our feverish attempts to settle the world's or even our neighbour's problems is based on Adam wanting to take over. We have learned to forget how to listen to Eve.

And what prevents us from listening to Eve? Emotions and rationality.

Rationality

Reason is a useful instrument, indeed we cannot live a full human life without it (but still less can we be fully human by developing reason alone or above all else). Just like emotions and sensations, rationality is the instrument of higher consciousness. However, since the sixteenth century, we've given so much importance to rationality and science that the rest of our being has been completely forsaken and forgotten, even repudiated. Not only have we not integrated the mind and emotions, by submitting them to the higher consciousness in us, but we've completely depreciated the mysterious, the unknown, the non-rational—all that science cannot explain or understand. What can't be proven cannot exist. We became obsessed with science—which in a masterly pirouette is now saying unabashedly that it cannot ever know the fundamentals of reality. We have been lead astray by reason which is a good servant but a bad master. Indeed, reason on its own leads to the atomic bomb. For there is no wisdom in reason, and its role is to submit to wisdom, to the knowledge of the heart. Chesterton said facetiously that the madman is the one who has lost everything except reason. And what has he lost? Spontaneity, surrender, the sense of mystery, admiration. But most of all, humour. Reason cannot laugh. It is caught in a straight-jacket: it never wants to lose face. It must always be right.

Emotionalism

Emotionalism prevents love. We are brought up by people (parents, friends, and teachers) who have very often not even begun accepting their emotional bodies. They are just wallowing in emotional mire without knowing whether they are coming or going. Emotion is the realm of attraction and rejection. We are attracted by what pleases and repulsed by what displeases.

Our physical body follows this movement: foods, climates, clothes, textures are either attractive (liked) or repulsive (disliked). Our emotional body does it too: persons are either for us attractive or not. Those we “like,” we want; those we think we “have,” we defend against the others who want them and against those things and events which could take away or destroy our “possessions.” When we are strongly attracted, we are repulsed with equal intensity by the opposite. It is something like Newton’s “action equals reaction” principle. The same can be said finally for the mental level (where of course emotions have more or less invaded the territory): if we are American we can’t stand Communism; if we are Catholic, we can’t hear about reincarnation; and if we are Tory we can’t bear the other side’s thinking (if we can call it that).

There are friends and enemies all along and we are caught between both. We are incensed when insulted; we start purring when congratulated: we are the marionettes of attraction and repulsion. Whatever is done to us, we simply respond on cue like the famous dog.

As long as we are torn apart by likes and dislikes, we cannot really love. To love unconditionally, universally and without expecting a response, we must go beyond emotionalism and rational consciousness, to the deep inner knowing which is a compassionate understanding of the suffering of others. There is warmth and tenderness here, but not the nervous instability of emotionalism. A good example of this love is Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who could not do what she does if she were living on the emotional level.

Beyond emotionalism

This is where Eve in us is present and alive and well. It is this dimension in us where admiration, compassion, understanding, joy, peace, and spontaneity reside. This is where we find the counsellor and the teacher in us. I have taught for 30 years in 5 universities and in different schools, and I now feel that the Radiant Being inside is the only teacher. The little ego (the mental/emotional self) is only trying to manipulate others. But in general, this is the one we hire to teach. We do not ask that the teacher be above all, happy, harmonious, in love with oneself and with life, creative, emotionally integrated, wise, capable of recognizing his or her mistakes and weaknesses in class, universal and open to other ways of seeing and thinking, etc. We ask for book knowledge, quantitative lore, lots of degrees: we care about having, not about being.

Having and being

The having in us is on Adam’s side, our Yang capacity. The being is on Eve’s side, the Yin. Having is needing to rely on externals—things, persons, degrees, positions, nominations, appraisals—to *be* of value. Like a cathedral needing buttresses to stand up. It is turning outside for

validation. Outside where quantity and measurement and multiplicity can be counted, proved, and judged.

Being is happening from the inside. It is at the source. Being is a restful, relaxed, open, surrendered state. It goes with the flow. It does not resist. Because it is not *prehensive* (does not live to conquer, redress, or manipulate), it is *comprehensive*: it understands by being one with, by being fearless.

Adam is fearful (that is why he attacks). Eve is fearless (and therefore without defence). We attack and agress inasmuch as we are afraid. Gandhi once visited a violent group of guerrilla fights, fúllly armed and ready for attack. He told them: "You are armed because you are afraid. I have no fear, therefore I need no arms." We fight what we hate (dislike). It is again this see-saw of attraction/rejection. As long as we are in fear, we are continually going from one side to the other. At this level, hating is the opposite of liking.

But there is this other dimension where one is no more in fear but in Love. *Love is not the opposite of anything*, simply because there is no fear to kindle the fight. Love embraces, comprehends, enfolds, receives all and encompasses all (starting with what is in us). Love has no enemies, while the ego has enemies everywhere.

To reach this silent beingness within, we must go back to the seed that holds the secret of the tree. We must go back beyond the rational which has opened the rift between us and reality, between body and mind, between outer man and his inner divineness. We must go back to the child in us, enriched by all the lessons and experiences provided by adolescent and adult life. Not that we must relinquish responsibilities and rationality, but we must start letting the confidence in life, the goodness in us, the felt union with all things already experienced but lost in the "fight for life," rise up through the hardened strata of repressed feelings, pains, faults, mistakes, and rejected acts. We must recuperate the confidence in life in spite of the lack of confidence which we've built on top of the first.

Loving oneself

We must learn first of all to love ourselves, not as we wish we were but as we are. Loving is not liking. There is a capacity in us to understand our repressed feelings and rejections which can melt the hardness and flood our dryness with the goodness of life. Loving ourselves is accepting what is in us in spite of it being pleasant or not. Accepting everything as is, without refusing, judging, condemning. Looking at it as a cow watches a train go by or a scientist watches a specimen behave in his lab. Just let the thing be and unfold according to its law. Just say yes to all you said no to.

We cannot even begin to love others without first loving our own

being. Unconditionally. That is, as the word says: without conditions, not “when I’ve got rid of this” or “when I’ve reached the stage when,” but now, as is, with no frills.

Past and present

Self-acceptance brings one into the present. It is fear that holds us back in the past or propels us into a fictional future. We are afraid of our ugly past (the devils in our basements, the ghosts in our attics), and yet we long for what we liked and which “sadly never returns”; similarly, we yearn for “the day my house will be payed for,” “when I’ll get my divorce,” “when I’ll have finished university,” etc., and yet we fear the future because of its hidden threats. Again we are torn between what we like and dislike. Fear on one side, desire on the other. No rest in between.

But beyond, yes. In the acceptance of what is, now. The beyond is in the present. This instant is beyond past and future: it is the only real thing, and therefore beyond the past which is in my mind like the imagined or feared future.

Recently, I had an experience of what living in the now could mean. I fell from a third storey, through the floor, eleven feet down. It was naturally very painful for the body. But something happened on my way to the floor. It happened inside consciousness. Since I did not *expect* anything, nor have any *fear*, time stopped during my fall. I discovered that *when there is no desire nor fear* (the two opposite poles attracting each other), *there is no time*. And when there is no desire or fear, there is no ego. The ego is the space in us where we harbour fear (along with its satellites: hate, anger, guilt). When we are out of fear, we are in Love. And there, no time exists, just the eternal now.

Everything is experienced as interesting, as valuable in itself: nothing is seen as leading towards something else or less important than another experience or moment.

Growing

This is where the seed in us knows all about the tree which it fully contains in the form of a possibility, an aspiration, a project, a calling, a growth process. Growing is listening to this calling which forever invites us to leave the known and the established, for other forms, experiences, levels of consciousness.

All is there in seed form, and if we tend to it, listen to it, wait upon it and develop it, the tree starts realizing itself. We don’t have to push on it. We do nothing, really. “You don’t make a flower grow by pulling on its petals,” said the wise Tagore. You don’t give yourself life, nor the desire for infinity, nor the capacity to grow. It is a given. (You don’t teach children, you *let* them learn and grow.) All you do is *favour* the growth

and not disfavour it by negative attitudes such as fear and aggressiveness.

Nothing that is of real importance is done by us. Life unfolds through us and as us. But the flow is not ours, not in our possession, and the illusion that we lead our own lives, that we *have* life and own it is one that is hard to lose. But just look at yourself sleeping: who does the sleeping? You don't *do* anything, really: it simply sleeps. Indeed, it is because you don't intervene that it goes so smoothly. Were you to try to sleep, you would simply prevent its onset.

Similarly, you are not the one that does the breathing: it breathes. Ever since the first breath, the process has gone on without ceasing. As some time in childhood, you were told about breathing—but your body had certainly not waited for this “knowledge” to follow its own infinitely wiser knowledge of the laws of life. In the same way, you do have emotions: emotions happen on their own, and have done so ever since you were within the womb. Of course, you can modify your breathing through yoga exercises, or “control” your emotions, *but you do not decide to breathe or have emotions, the process is on before you ever acquire the power to decide anything.*

Finally, thinking is a process that has unfolded since birth and beyond, yet you only discover it when you develop rational consciousness. Does this make it happen? No, it is only then *recognized*. Nothing that our faculties of rational analysis can do changes the fact that we are many streams and strands of life processes all in one. These streams and strands develop on their own and according to their laws.

But accepting all this creates a freedom and wisdom which is of the same quality and value as breathing, thinking, and sleeping. Accepting the flow of life through us, receiving life as it is expressed through us, flowing with the current instead of resisting it through fear, aggressiveness, or doubt, returns us to wholeness of being and releases the forces of creativity and love in us. We have simply constricted love and life through our anxiety-laden mind. Anxiety comes from a latin word (*angustia*) meaning a straight, a constricted passage. A strangulation. Fear strangles life. It prevents love.

Beyond rationality

Of course, we've organized everything so beautifully. The world is over-organized. We've not listened to the expression of the universal laws in us or in reality, we've violated nature, we've wounded and poisoned the earth with our mental and chemical pollutants, and we've certainly created hives and hives of ordinally compounded cities, groups, ideas, and systems. We've developed Adam to a point where he has become a cancer. Simple survival demands that we heal ourselves by recuperating our full being, by going beyond a part into the actualization of the whole.

And that in my view can only be done by recognizing our passion for domination, organization and analysis—all the divisive energies in us which unite things only to separate them from the whole or from others (viz. the Churches or the Body of Medicine)—and start tuning in to the unifier, to the simple acceptance and love we knew as a child. And know as the child in us at this moment.

We need to stop carrying the world on our shoulders like some Atlas. We need to take a bath, relax, listen to quiet music, to light a candle and burn some incense, and let the deep energy fields unfold in us. We need in fact to meditate, that is, to *be completely still and completely conscious*.

Naturally, we can take courses in rebirthing, primal scream, we can be rolfed and regressed and shrinked, learn about bio-energy and gestalt, psychosynthesis and the rest, but my experience with these is that no technique will do the trick. *No technique can free me of my fundamental fear*. Techniques can only help you prepare yourself. They clear the way. To what? to an absolutely personal decision of surrendering to the whole of reality, of letting go unconditionally of all that constricts. The alcoholic illustrates my point: an alcoholic cannot change, whatever your arguments and means of persuasion, until finally surrendered to the fact that he or she is indeed an alcoholic. *Once an alcoholic accepts him or herself fully, he or she changes*. No one can do this for someone else. No one and nothing.

Much more than learning techniques, we need to listen to the heart, to Eve, to the Yin side, to the deep life within. It knows without needing explanation. (We need explanation inasmuch as we don't understand.) It just sees the whole of reality without wasting time on details. It has a view from higher (or deeper). It comprehends everything because the barriers of fear do not prevent it from encompassing all.

Surrendering

We need to put ourselves in the current of life and learn to let go. To surrender to what is and to the love energy that has launched us, that moves us and the world. Einstein rightly stated that “reason cannot understand or explain reality.” The New Scientists (Bohm, Pribram, Domash, Prigogine, Sheldrake, Wigner, Capra, Chew, Wheeler) see reality as a sea of energy, of vibrations, where no isolated beings are separable from the rest; where to understand anything you have to comprise the whole.

So it is with us. We cannot understand ourselves unless we accept the whole of our being, and especially the most important dimension. For it is my experience that what nature has put down first as the foundation in our life is the matrix, the ground, the seed and pattern of our whole unfolding.

Teaching and counselling

We can teach and counsel inasmuch as we are in harmony with our deep self. It is not Adam who teaches; he disciplines and organizes—values which have become important if not primary simply because the essential attitude has been lost. For it is not the subject matter that counts: what we teach is ourselves, *our fundamental attitudes* to reality, our state of love or fear.

Whatever we say outside of this direct communication is like the lacing around the dress. We teach inasmuch as we are growing and learning. If we do not keep on learning our lessons, we stop teaching: we *manipulate*. We get into Adam's rut which is domination, clutching and possessing. We must be ourselves above all. If we are afraid of crying in front of a class, we haven't accepted everything in us. We have lessons to learn before we can really teach.

To teach or counsel (or simply live consciously) we must be autonomous. Being autonomous doesn't mean one can do as one pleases. It is not a free-for-all, letting one's hair down, bleeding in public or dropping one's garbage on Mother Earth. It means being faithful to one's own inner law—being faithful to oneself. We are each unique and that is the way, the only way, we can manifest the divine presence in this world. It is no accident that we are so different. We must respect this and be ourselves completely, without shame or regrets, but without dominance either. Being autonomous is not needing to be appraised or recognized in order to value oneself. It is the path of solitude. If one really wants to be oneself fully, to be free, to be in Love, one must not submit to anyone outside, only to the Radiant Being within.

Opening up to life

To me, being completely human is passing *from the closed fist to the open palm*, from fear to Love.

A final image comes to mind. I see myself as a block of solid marble. In front of me is a sculptor, approaching with his hammers and chisels. All I see is destruction, losses: he is chopping away all of my cherished pieces, life is a dreadful series of disasters. Until one day, the perception changes radically: instead of seeing the pieces falling away I sense there is a sculpture growing. There is construction. The action has not changed: all is as before. Only, the perception of it has changed. I understand that all is a process of learning and letting the creative energy take over. I am learning to let the seed become a tree. I am home again, in the flow of things. In my beginning I have rediscovered my end. For all was waiting there while I got lost on the outskirts of my being. All is there from the beginning, if I only learn to hear the original pulse at the root of my heart.

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